

# THE MIDLAND

A MAGAZINE OF THE MIDDLE WEST

---

VOL. XIII

DECEMBER, 1927

NO. 12

---

## OLD JOE

By JAMES HEARST

The street lamp on the corner by the hospital flickered and went out like a match caught in a gust of air. Inside the building a pale light flowing through the windows gradually filled the rooms and corridors. From somewhere in the basement a freight elevator loaded with breakfast trays was booming its way slowly upwards. When the night nurse came in with his wash tray a few minutes later Old Joe Hoffman, propped up on his pillows in room 17, knew that morning had come at last.

"If I was at home, I would have been up an hour ago doing chores," he told the night nurse.

In the half light of morning her face shone with a moist pallor. "Would you?" She handed him a towel and disappeared through the door, wondering whether she could possibly finish her work before it was time to go off duty.

Old Joe carefully scrubbed his face and hands. There rose up in his mind the picture of the small truck garden farm which he owned at the edge of town. He thought of his old mare, Maud, who always whickered to him when he opened the barn doors in the morning and was the first to be fed; of the two spotted pigs grunting and nuzzling over turnips and corn; of the cow he milked near an open door where he could look out over his corner of land and see the sun come up from behind the trees; of the calf there would be to feed; of the dog, sometimes known as Jeppie and sometimes Jap, who

followed him wherever he went; of himself, after the chores were done, going into the house to get his own breakfast — for his wife had gone back to the earth years before. By the time he had finished washing he could feel the pressure of the milk-pail handle against his fingers and hear Jap sniffing at his heels.

He wrung out the wash cloth and folded the towel carefully; he could not get used to having clean linen every day. Then he waited for the floor girl to come and take his things. When she came he smiled at her and said,

"We got the chores all done."

The girl twisted the corners of her mouth. "You don't say, Grandpa." She slouched out of the room chewing gum loudly. She had been to a dance the night before and she was tired and irritable.

Old Joe lay back on his pillows and closed his eyes. His stubby, calloused hands were stretched out, palms down, at his sides on the bed spread. From lack of work they were growing slightly puffy, and their brown color was fading to a pale tan. They lay so still that until his breakfast tray came in Old Joe might have been asleep. But he wasn't, for when the orderly appeared in the door he sat up and pushed a roll of newspapers across his knees to help balance the tray.

"Better let me set it on the table, Joe," said the orderly. "Won't you spill your coffee this way?"

But old Joe, as steady as a clock, set the tray across his lap, timidly careful that nothing spilled on the clean napkin lying folded on one end of it. He could manage better this way, he could never learn to eat from the bedside table.

"Well, how are you this morning, anyway, Joe?" The orderly stopped for just a minute.

"I'm pretty good. This was the day I was going to set out my cabbage plants . . . but I got sick."

The orderly humored him. "So this was the day, huh."

Old Joe forgot his breakfast and looked up at him. "I had them all out in cans, one plant in each can; big, strong ones, each by itself. I had the land plowed, all ready to be smoothed like a garden . . . then I got sick."

The nurse in charge of the floor came in to leave the day's supply of linen, and saw the orderly standing there.

"I'm sorry to take your company away from you, Mr. Hoffman," she said, "but there are a few more trays to be carried. You will excuse this young man while he finishes his work." The room was quiet while she laid a clean sheet and a towel on the dresser with professional dexterity.

The orderly grinned and shuffled out into the corridor behind her.

Old Joe began to eat his breakfast. But this morning he was not hungry and after trying a few sips of coffee and a taste of his cereal he gently moved the tray to the table. Then he picked up his thick silver watch which lay on the bottom shelf of the table to see what time it was, and lay back on his pillows watching the door.

His room was a two-bed room, but now no one occupied the bed opposite his and the smoothness of its neatly laid covers made that part of the room seem bare and cold. He seldom looked at it, preferring instead the open doorway, or, if the door was shut, the wall in front of him. He never asked to have the door opened for he was a little afraid of the nurses who were so deft and swift in their movements.

But this morning he was glad to see them when they came in to make his bed. He wanted to tell them about his little farm and how today he had meant to set out his cabbages. But the girls had just been reprimanded by their supervisor and were so angry and so nearly crying that they had nothing to say.

He waited then for the doctor who was kind to him when he was not in a hurry.

"So you were going to set out cabbages today, Joe,"

said the doctor pleasantly. "I'm sorry you couldn't for I've had some of your cabbages." He smacked his lips.

Old Joe was as pleased as a child. "You will have some more, doctor, when I am up again. This year I have some special ones set out for transplanting in cans by themselves."

But the doctor was not listening. "Let me see his chart," he said to his secretary, "um . . . respiration normal . . . temperature normal . . . um."

He turned to his patient. "You are getting on fine, Joe. Feel all right? That's good. These young ladies treat you all right?" He smiled and hurried away.

A profound quietness enveloped the hospital. Old Joe lay very still among his pillows, and the bed clothes arched smoothly over his body and legs like a wind carved snow bank. His hands lay at his sides, palms downward, and his wrinkled face was set in a bewildered expression. Loneliness from all over his body was drawn up into a weight on his breast, and he had a miserable feeling that he was no longer, as he would say, any good.

As the sun swung toward ten o'clock it threw a square of light through the south window of Old Joe's room and laid it at the foot of the bed.

When the full square was visible on the bed old Joe knew it was ten o'clock, for he had checked the patch of light with his watch. The sunshine, at least, was familiar, and he rubbed his hands together as though bathing them in the light. He did not try to guess when it crept to noon, though he was glad when dinner time came for it meant activity in the corridor. The floor girl brought him his dinner. Old Joe would have spoken to her, but she shoved the tray on his table and was gone with a twist of her hips.

He ate part of his dinner because it smelled good.

Then, daring to disturb his bed clothes, he turned on his side and went to sleep.

About three o'clock he was awakened by a noise in the room. He opened his eyes and found that the orderlies had brought in a patient for the other bed.

"Company for you, Joe," said one of the orderlies.

Old Joe's mild blue eyes glistened and he touched his faintly yellow beard. "That's good," he said.

When the orderlies had gone Old Joe tried his new room mate with a few questions.

"You have been hurt? Do you feel better now?"

The patient, under the influence of morphine, groaned in his sleep and tossed one arm back and forth as though he were in pain. His groaning brought a nurse to the door and she stood there for a moment watching him. Then she said to Old Joe.

"I will have to shut the door so he won't disturb the other patients." Then as an after thought she added, "He is an Italian boy from the shops. He doesn't speak English."

When she had shut the door tightly and gone, Old Joe raised himself on one elbow and looked at his room mate. He was asleep. But Old Joe, in a low husky whisper, told him all about the truck garden farm and the cabbages in special cans ready to be planted.

---

### WITCH WIFE

By LOLA MALLATT

White full wheaten loaves of peace

Stay your hand in breaking;

This is bread of bitterness

Offered, of her baking.

Bitterness of thirst full-quenched,

Choke of hunger fed;

Never think to quest again,

If you break her bread.

## TWO PORTRAITS

By SIDNEY DRAKE

### VESPERS

If you should see her by her window there,  
The late sun burnishing the walnut frame  
Of her high rocker, lighting silver flame  
In the loose tendrils of her parted hair  
So lightly laid against the patterned sheen  
Of the chair's tapestry — some nameless shade,  
Evasive, opalescent, that from blue and green  
Long years of days of sun and wear have made —  
Should you thus watch her in her brave, blue gown,  
Its wide sleeves loosing mists of lace in vain  
To hide the hollowed wrists, the where alone  
She can not give the laughing lie to pain —  
And should she, sensing that you near her stood,  
Turn her head toward you, and should smile  
(As very soon and certainly she would !)  
It would be to you then as though, the while  
You knelt at winter vespers where were hung  
Curtains of gray-blue dusk and incensed air,  
Swift from an unseen road were clearly flung  
A shower of silver sleighbells down your prayer.

### BLIND BOY READING

With lifted head and far, unshifting gaze,  
He quickens as his facile fingers trace  
Lafcadio Hearn up tortuous mountain trails  
To sunstained snow. His fluttering hand unveils  
From mist a valley, and his pulses leap  
Not less than hers who, hours, between a sleep  
And her due task, the pile of pages Brailled  
That some might see whose lesser sight had failed.

Beside his chair his stick, discarded, lies.  
Slow, from our sky, the twilight tinting dies.  
Though, to our vision, limited by light,  
Comes, unequivocally, obscure night —  
Though our small measurable day is gone —  
His fervent fingers watch the flow of dawn.

---

### THE TRUTH

By GRACE STONE COATES

"A grotesque absurdity," said my father.  
"It is better than nothing," said mother.  
"It is infinitely worse than nothing," said father.  
Mother did not answer. She was stitching a seam on  
the sewing machine, and couldn't look up. The machine  
was old; so she had to watch the thread.

"It is a travesty," said father. "The entire conception  
is a travesty on truth, but this is a travesty on the  
poesy that lies back of the conception."

Mother answered with spirit this time: "It has the  
truth of kindness and good will, and wanting to give  
happiness, and making the best of hardships."

They were talking about the Christmas tree at the  
school house, which the Sunday school women were ar-  
ranging for the children. Mrs. Guare and Mrs. Slump  
had come to tell mother about it, one day when father  
was in town. They came in the morning. No one visited  
us very often. Mrs. Guare had a pleasant voice, and her  
words were like mother's. Mrs. Slump made me listen  
harder, because she used words I didn't know. She  
didn't wear stockings under her shoes in summer time;  
and Mrs. Crachy said she didn't wear underclothes un-  
der her wrapper. I could have found out, once, but  
mother wouldn't let me.

After the women had talked for a time I stopped listening  
to them. I was playing that my doll was delirious  
and had to be held in bed. When she slept I read the

New York Sun. I read the *Cream of the Telegraph*, because the stories were short and had space between them. The words were short, too, and I knew what they meant.

I knew about the Sun. Father had told me. His father learned to read English out of it when he first came to this country. Father knew Dana. I wasn't sure in my mind who was Dana and who was Goethes Faust. Father talked about them both. When father talked about them I felt inside the same way I did when mother told me about God. Father was ashamed of me because I thought Goethes Faust was one man. He said, "Preposterous absurdity!" and told me Goethe wrote Faust. I wondered what he wrote him. I didn't quite understand about Goethe and Faust; but I didn't entirely understand about God, either.

I stopped reading, and put the paper under me — I was sitting on the floor — because Mrs. Slump said, "Look-iter pertend to read!"

The women and mother were bothered about something; so I watched them. Mrs. Slump said: "I ain't no hand to go beaten around the bush. It's just this-away. We-all like you, and want you in our Crismus tree; but if you're scart to ask your man for the money, being as how he's an onbeliever, we want you in it anyhow, whether you give nothin' or not."

When mother laughed she sounded like flowers. She laughed now. She wasn't bothered any more. She said, "Of course I want to help with the Christmas tree! What my husband believes doesn't matter — does it?" She smiled at them. "Put my name down for whatever the rest are giving."

She rose and went into the living room — we were sitting in the kitchen where there was a fire — and beyond into her bedroom. She came back with her pocket book.

"How much did you put me down for?" mother asked. Mrs. Guare had a list of names in her hand.

"A quarter," said Mrs. Guare, "That's what the rest of us gave."

Mother handed her a coin. "Will that be enough?" she asked.

"Yes. We thought it would seem friendly if we all gave the same."

Mrs. Slump stared openly at mother. "Can you give it right out, that-away, without seein' the mister first?" she asked.

Mother laughed again, "Oh, yes!"

The women began to talk faster, planning the Christmas program. There was to be candy in colored sacks. They would have a Santa Claus. Claud Slump would be Santa Claus. Mrs. Slump looked in my direction, and said very loud, "Claud can go out and get Santy when we are ready for him." Mother smiled at me and said, "She will not tell."

"She knows about Santa Claus?" asked Mrs. Guare.

Mother said yes, again. I was surprised that any one would think I had not heard of Santa Claus. I had seen pictures of him. I didn't know till mother told me, that some children thought he was real besides his clothes.

The candy bags were to be made of pink and white mosquito netting. Mrs. Guare thought Santa could come in carrying the sacks in a clothes basket.

"Oh, hang them on the tree," mother cried, "Hang them on the tree! They will help fill it up. We'll string popcorn and cranberries, and festoon it all over!" Mother's cheeks were red and her eyes shone.

"There ain't no tree," said Mrs. Slump.

Mother's face looked as if it had stopped. "No tree," she said; "No tree! How can we have a Christmas tree without a tree?"

"There isn't money enough," said Mrs. Guare. "We have thought and thought. There isn't money. We can buy candy, but that is all. We can't ask people to give more than they have given. I can't give more. It is

the same with all of us. No crops — ” Her voice trailed off.

Mother looked through the window toward the snowy prairie. “If this were Ohio, now, or Wisconsin, we’d run out to the first hill and cut a fir tree.”

“I’ve been figgerin’,” said Mrs. Slump, “that if we could find somebody’s got a dead peach tree they ain’t burned yet, and they’d let us have it, we could use that.”

“A peach tree!” Mother’s voice sounded startled.

“It ‘ud be better ‘n nothin’. I got some old green calico off a comfort that’s wore out, and we could wrap little strips around the branches, maybe, so it ‘ud be green.” She turned to Mrs. Guare, “Ain’t they some dead trees in that east orchard of yours?”

“There are dead trees enough,” Mrs. Guare said doubtfully.

“That settles it,” said Mrs. Slump. “We’ve got our tree, if askin’s havin’!”

“Very well,” said mother, “we’ll make it as pretty as we can. It will hold the candy, anyway, and we’ll cover it with popcorn and cranberries, and plenty of tapers.”

“There ain’t no tapers,” said Mrs. Slump.

“There will have to be,” said mother, firmly. “It would be too dark.” *Too* dark, she said, not too *dark*. I thought she was crying, but she wasn’t.

The women finished making their plans. They were to come back the next week, on Thursday, to sew the candy-bags; and go to the school house, Friday, to wrap the tree. They would go Friday, because it might take a long time, and they could finish the work Saturday if they needed to. They would have the program Sunday. Saturday was Christmas day, but they would have the tree Sunday, so every one could come. The minister would be there.

The minister came to preach at the school house whenever he wasn’t some place else. He made me sleepy when he talked. He said some words round and loud, and

the next words quick and short until he came to another long word. The long words were the same distance apart, and the sound made me go to sleep. Father called him the Holy Ignoramus of the Lord, and mother always said, "Henry, please don't!"

After the women had gone, father came home. Mother told him about the Christmas tree. Birthdays were father's, but Christmas day was usually mother's. This Christmas belonged to all of us. Father and mother had something they were happy over. Almost always, when they were happy, it was about something my sister or I had done. It wasn't about us, this time. They whispered together and smiled when we were not close to them. Father didn't hate any thing about the Christmas plans except the peach tree. He kept calling that a travesty. Mother was sorry we couldn't have a real Christmas tree but said we must do the best we could.

Father made fun of the tree until the night before Thursday when the women were coming to make the bags. That night he was in earnest and wouldn't laugh. He said it was a crime to let a child's first impression of any thing be a false one. He said that for children who had never seen one before, a Christmas tree would remain forever a dead peach tree wrapped in rags. I didn't understand all he said, but I liked to listen. He talked about solar myths, and the aspirations of the human spirit, and truth being always beautiful; and falsehood ugliest when it flaunted itself as religion. He said we couldn't go to the peach-tree.

Mother stopped talking and her mouth was a straight line. I was sorry. I knew how father felt. Christmas trees seemed queer to me, too. I couldn't understand them. I knew they hung Christ on one, and it seemed disrespectful, afterward, to hang presents on them and be happy about it. Mother had a song about

*When He shed His blood for me  
On the cruel, bitter tree.*

When she sang it, father said a poem about

*The God became flesh, and was hung on a tree  
To redeem His misdeeds by His infinite love.*

My aunt, who lived in Wisconsin, had a fir tree in her yard. Its needles scratched my hands, and were bitter when I pinched them in my teeth. I thought they should have hung Christ on a tree that didn't have needles; but I thought a Christmas tree would be fun, if we tried not to remember about Christ; and I wanted to go.

Mother sent my sister Teresa and me to bed. She and father talked lower and lower. When they talked together without laughing I was frightened without knowing what I was afraid of.

What wakened me in the morning was father whistling in the kitchen. It was dark, and he had lighted a lamp. He was walking back and forth whistling. Mother called, "Henry, are you up?" Father said, "Yes," and began to whistle again. He made up the tunes he whistled. Mother called again, "What are you doing at this time of night?", and father said, "Tinkering around."

We had breakfast by lamp light. When it was daylight, I went to the barn to see what father was doing. He was hitching up the lumber wagon. He said he was going to town. I started to run to the house and he called me back. He told me not to tell mother he was going. I didn't go to the house, then, because there was nothing to go for. Father unwrapped the lines from the brake, and jumped into the wagon. He helped me in, and we drove to the house.

Mother came out to the lane, and said, "Where are you going?"

Father said, "To town."

She said, "Today? In the wagon? What for?"

"Oh, some odds and ends."

When father wasn't answering he was whistling. His

whistling was tuneless like wind. It had no place it needed to stop, as songs did; it went on and on.

Mother shut her lips tight. There was something she didn't say. She reached her hand to me, and I jumped down.

When father had driven away, mother went into her bedroom. She stayed a long time. I began to be unhappy. I put my doll on the table and pretended it was just a doll. When mother came out, she had her hair combed high on top of her head the way we liked it best. She caught my hands and whirled me around in a little dance we played, and we said, "We will have the nicest day! We must hurry and straighten up the house, for we are going to make candy bags this afternoon. If we are thru with the housework before dinner time, we can pop the corn and have it all ready to string."

We went to work. I brought cobs and filled the cob-boxes. Some winters we burned cobs, and some winters, coal. One winter we burned ears of corn, and the Slumps burned twisted hay. After I filled the cob-boxes I went to a place no one knew about except me. Until some one found me there, no one knew where to look; and no one had found me yet. I sat and listened to the wind, and to mother's and Teresa's feet. I could tell who was walking by the sound. The wind made a whistling like father's, only larger and more tired.

Four women came in the afternoon, with a pail of candy. They cut bags and folded them, and mother stitched them on the machine. They put all the candy in bags tied with red gathering strings, and piled the sacks on the table in the living room. One woman kept wondering whether they had enough, and how many sacks there were. Mother's voice sounded sharp; she said, "Go in and count them, Mrs. Crachy." Mrs. Crachy said, "O no, I didn't mean that!" as if she were in a hurry, but mother made her go in and count the sacks and put down how many there were on a piece of paper.

Mrs. Slump asked mother if the younguns would leave the candy be, on the table. When mother said we would, Mrs. Crachy said, "Different with mine!" Mother was annoyed. She said, "My children know better than to touch the candy, without my telling them; but if you wish me to caution them, I will." She called me to her — Teresa was sitting beside her; she had been helping make bags — and said distinctly, "The candy on the table belongs to the Sunday school. Neither of you are to touch it. Do you understand?" We both said, "Yes."

When mother was getting supper, after the women had gone, I touched each of the sacks with my fore finger. There were forty-two. One I couldn't reach, without moving some of the others, and I reached in with a crochet needle and touched that.

Supper was late, because we waited for father. We ate without him, and when we were thru he came. When mother heard the wagon in front of the house, she put my coat on me and sent me out with the lantern. It was dark, but I could see something long sticking out of the end of the wagon. I asked father if it was a new wagon tongue, and he said, "Yes." He unhitched the horses while I held the lantern, and we led them to the barn. He stopped at the wagon, on the way back, to get a package, and we went into the kitchen. He put the package on the floor in the corner, and said, "After supper," and sat down to eat. Mother asked him why he unhitched the wagon in front of the house. Father said he left the wagon there to take us to the school house in the morning. Father knew mother would not ride in the lumber wagon. He looked at her as if he wanted her to smile, and when she didn't he said he had something in the wagon to unload.

After the dishes were washed, and the table-spread put back on the table, father lifted the package from the corner and asked mother to open it. She put it on the table under the lamp. When the cover came off, the box lay

full of things that shone and glittered, yards and yards of silver and gilt, shining feathery strings that I didn't know the meaning of. In one end of the box were candles. "Tapers, not candles," father corrected me. Mother said, "How *like* you, Henry, how *like* you, to leave me all day, thinking — " She caught her breath and whispered, "I know what is in the wagon!"

I jumped up and down and said, "A wagon tongue." Father said to me, "Don't be foolish," before he said to mother, "Yes, I bought the louts a tree. I couldn't bear to have children given a false conception."

Mother put her arms around father's neck. Teresa went into the other room where it was dark. She always went away when any thing was happening. If she was close enough to me, she used to pinch me and say, "You little beast," because I wouldn't go with her.

Mother stepped back. "But, Henry, the money? You didn't go into debt for all this?"

"A trifle, a mere trifle, all of it," father began; but mother insisted, "No, really, please! I have a right to ask."

Father took an envelope from his pocket. He turned it over and over in his fingers, then laughed and tossed it onto the table. "The whole foolishness didn't cost as much as a money order to the Sun. I can get along without the paper for a year. I knew Dana."

Mother put her arms around his neck again. Father kept patting her back, and saying, "We'll be out of the woods, some day. We'll be out of the woods, some day." I knew he didn't mean trees.

Mother motioned me to go to bed. When she came in to say goodnight, I told her the joke on Mrs. Crachy about touching the candy sacks. She looked at me a long time, and then went out and looked at the bags. She called to me to come and show her how I touched them. I went in my nightgown and showed her. She asked me if I touched any of the strings. I couldn't remember

that, because I had touched them wherever it was easiest. She looked at my face a long time, again, and put me to bed.

In the morning father got up early once more, to make a standard for the Christmas tree. He said he wanted a workmanlike job done, and was afraid the Gentleman of the Cloth might handle a saw the way he handled the English language. While father worked he told me about the tree. He said it was exceptionally symmetrical, and showed me the needles, and how the branches grew. I didn't know what some of the words he used meant.

Mother would not let Teresa and me go to the school house, Friday, so we didn't see the tree again until it was trimmed. I knew how it was going to look and it looked that way. We all spoke pieces. Mrs. Crachy called our names. She called on father. When she called on him some people laughed. Mother wasn't listening hard, and thought Mrs. Crachy called on her; so she started up the aisle. Mrs. Slump leaned and caught at her shawl, and whispered, "It's the mister they want, it's the mister!" Mother was thinking about something else and didn't notice Mrs. Slump. She wrapped her shawl close around her just as Mrs. Slump got hold of it. When mother had spoken, the people stamped and clapped so long I didn't remember until the next day that it was father they had called on.

After the recitations were over, Claud Slump was Santa Claus. He gave every one a sack of candy, and his sisters two. It was fun, but I was tired. As soon as the minister began to talk I leaned against father to go to sleep. He put his arm over my shoulders. I slept a long time, and when I wakened something was happening. Every thing was quiet except the minister. Mother was sitting tall and straight, looking the way that made me afraid to ask her questions. Father sat lower and lower on the bench, and his hand closed and opened on my arm. I looked over my shoulder to see if I could tell what was

happening. I looked as easily as I could, so mother wouldn't shake her head at me to stop. I couldn't see anything. The back of the room was dark, and the faces of people sitting on high desks made white patches. Every one was looking toward the minister, and listening to him, so I began to listen, too. I was sorry I hadn't listened before, because he was almost thru. He was saying: "And now little boys and girls, since our erring brother has given us this beautiful tree, when you go home to your homes tonight, I want you all together down on your knees, and pray God that He will lead our erring brother to the T R U T H . "

---

### SLEEP

By THELMA PHLEGAR

Wait for this hour warily.  
When sleep goes by, no man is free.

No man has ever yet outrun  
This subtle brief oblivion.

Quietly on his narrow bed  
Man lies with death, and is not dead.  
He wakes to talk of stones and bread.

Be wary, you of the eager breath:  
Sleep is a stranger thing than death.

## "ART WAS CUT OUT FOR ME"

By KATHERINE GIBSON

Hiawatha Jefferson is fifteen, very tall and large boned and loose sinewed. He gives the impression that his joints — particularly near the feet — are put together with debilitated elastic. When he sits down he does not do it all at once, but rather in sections, rattling along the floor like a huge mechanical toy that has come unstrung. When he stands up he does that gradually also, as if the straightening of his large frame were too much for a single youthful endeavor. He comes to a standing position in jerks like those of a five-and-ten-cent-store jointed wooden snake. He is very black — a big, broad, kindly face, eyes humorous at times, yet often worried looking and patient like those of a faithful but unhappy dog whose master, though all in all to him, is past the ways of canine understanding.

Hiawatha made his way into the Special Drawing Class through competition with three hundred other youthful aspirants, and having won that coveted position, he held his own. After his lesson he was often seen in the Children's Museum making sketches. Usually these were accompanied by chuckles, baby smiles, or turbulent guffaws from Tony and his friends as they gathered about him. He was "doin' funny men." He was! No one could execute "funny men" with such complete ease as Hiawatha. He thinks in "funny men" as a mathematician thinks in figures or an astronomer in stars.

"That guy, he's some drawerino," remarked Tony to Nick, his boon companion. "He can make 'em funny and he can make 'em good, too."

"You bet," replied Nick. "You know that berry upstairs — him wid a vest made outen bed springs — he drawed that guy swell."

(Nick is refering to a suit of armor made of many nar-

row plates which, possibly because it is metal — the uninitiated can fathom no other reason, — made him think of springs.)

"Yes, and he drawed that church picture; he made de  
curls swell; it looked just like a honest angel."

Hiawatha *can* draw "good." He draws surprisingly good. He works with impartial absorption upon a Gothic angel or a detail from a fifteenth century Spanish rug. He has a color sense that never deserts him and a passionate desire to "do it" that carries him into the midst of a problem with amazing security. He rushes in where artists fear to tread, and somehow arrives because he sees no difficulties. He draws instinctively. Intellect, in its harassing, questioning aspects, has little to do with his work; his emotions flow smoothly with no ultra-civilized restraints. Released from the bonds of effort, he simply draws. He draws as birds build nests or as a squirrel hides nuts, with absolute acceptance of his own acts. The results are slightly reminiscent of the performance of Blind Tom, who in some unknown fashion became the instrument of a power which he did not understand or question, but which he could somehow control because he had nothing within him to make interference possible.

Hiawatha worked hard that first winter and made decided improvement. Then he disappeared. For a whole year the Children's Museum did not see him, and it heard nothing. The following fall, one bright September day, he slouched quietly into the room.

"Been havin' a kinda hard time. My father ain't had no work scurceely tu speak of, no ma'am. Ah worked some; but Ah ain't had no carfare, so Ah couldn't come. But"—his heavy features seemed to lighten a little because of some faint glimmer behind them—"but we done move now. Ah can walk."

Again Hiawatha essayed the class and made it and held his own. His progress in the Museum was excellent,

he found his difficulties entirely in the business and scholastic world.

"Miss Ahmstrong," he said to his teacher one spring afternoon, "Miss Ahmstrong, de School Bohd am full of apple sauce."

"Why is the School Board full of apple sauce, Hiawatha?"

"They am interferin' wid my career."

"How's that?"

"Ah washes dishes and sings at a restaurant, nights. The School Bohd done say Ah'm too young, an' Ah can't wash dishes no more. Is singin' work?"

"What do you mean, work?"

"They done say Ah can't work; ef singin' is workin', Ah can't sing, ef it ain't, Ah can. Ah figured it ain't; so Ah still got my name out in front of de restaurant; but ef its workin'. . . ." After a moment's pause, "the school Doctor say Ah gotta have some teeth out."

"Then you better have it done at once."

"I ain't got no money, an Ah can't. The School Bohd, it says 'don't work' then it says 'have your teeth out'. How can Ah have my teeth out ef I don't work tu get the money tu do it? The School Bohd am full of apple sauce!"

Hiawatha stumbled out of the room in a state of inky depression. Later he was seen consoling himself on the pedestal of a statue of Mark Hanna. Wound around one of that gentleman's bronze legs, he gazed through a long, improvised telescope across the Park. On being questioned about this afterwards, he remarked with some disdain, "Ah was studyin' nature foh my art; Ah done make that telescope 'cause Ah gets many unexpected views lookin' through that small hole."

Hiawatha's voice was not the least remarkable thing about him. One evening at a school entertainment, a large placard was put up: "The Next Number Will Surprise You." The next number was the singing of

"Love's Old Sweet Song" by a clear liquid, girlish voice. "It was really lovely," Miss Armstrong reported, "made one think of 1830, a girl in a white dress, and a harp, that sort of thing." When the song was finished the soloist lumbered on to the platform—Hiawatha. "It do seem," he remarked, "it do seem that the bigger Ah gets the higher up my voice goes; sh'e raisin' every day."

His ideas on art are sure and simple. In the Museum Class he was asked to write a page telling how he became interested in drawing. His answer to this request certainly shows no hesitation or uncertainty.

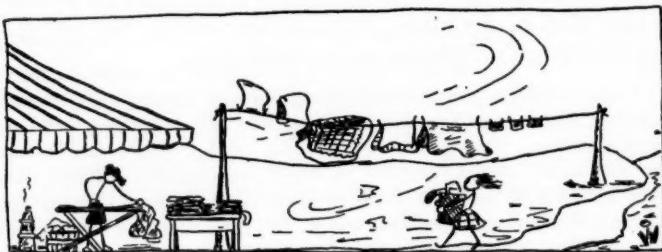
I cant remember how old I was. I have drawn pictures every since a incident happend in New Orleans La at 2416 Prieds between first and second streets. Then I was rather small. well I played mostly with streetcars and autos nothing else interested me. my uncles friend knew this and he drew for me a street car on a piece of store paper. at the bottom of this page I have given you a voige Idea of what I remember of this picture. The older folks took no interest whatever towards the picture but to me it was a treasure. I charrished it and taken the best care of it. until finnaly it was lost. I then resolved to replace the drawing myself. I tried hard, I worked at it every chance I got, I even did it in school, thats just the reason why I am so far behind now. I am 15 and only in the 7 A. I dont know weather I gained or lost. after I drew the ear I started to draw every thing.



No one else knows whether he lost or gained. Certainly academic attainment is not Hiawatha's strong point. His school reports that if there is an arithmetic lesson in full swing, Hiawatha manages to melt away. If there is a map to be drawn, an illustration to be put on a black



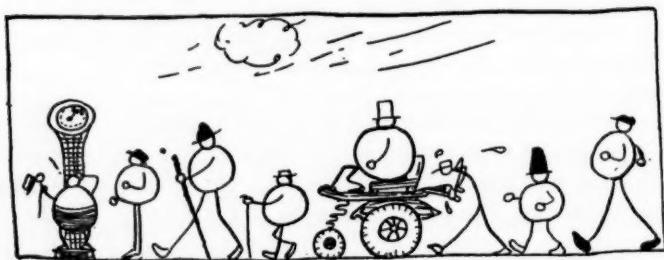
*For the Monday Menus*



*For the Tuesday Menus*



*For the Thin Men's Menus*



*For the Fat Men's Menus*

board, a poster to be designed, Hiawatha is always present. This constant pursuit of "his art" he also explained in his own words in response to a composition which his English class was required to write on "My Hobby."

As my closes friends well now I have specialized in art every sence I've met them. I have alway loved art and cartooning sence I was big enough to know what drawing meant. Many of my friends ask me how I draw so good of curse my art is not excellent or perfect but it could be worst or even worster. Some boys and girls think I was cut out for drawing but they are wrong art was cut out fer me. I tackled it young and I am still stuck on to it. I have voyage remembrance of how I began and begin loveing art of drawing. When I was small I hardly didnt cause my mother any trouble because she said I was always in some corner or underneath the house drawing stick men making them do some of the most peculaire tricks. I guess those stick men were very vexed and perplexed with me. I developed them by making the lines thicker and thicker until my stick men turned into little out of shape men I perfected the prepotions until I can draw em just as I want them and dont make bad jobs of them either. I guess I have about the biggest stack of drawings in my crowd the very earliest made drawing I have is one I made in 1922 in Chicago.

His stick or "funny men" served him well. One of his most signal attainments during his school year was the illustration of a cook book prepared by a domestic science class and printed in the school printing shop. These "funny men" illustrations saved Hiawatha from complete scholastic disaster. Having made up his mind that the School Board was beneath his consideration, that mathematics were to an artist as plum cake to a dyspeptic, having failed to find the value of fitting mysterious nouns to stealthy, masked verbs, Hiawatha began to play hookey. His record was worse than "poor."

A list was being made of those children in his class who had served the school well during the year, an honor list. Though he had slaved late and early over poster, shadow-graphs, and plays, his name did not appear; he was in disgrace. At the last moment his art teacher came to his rescue with a sheaf of stick men drawings in her

hand. The staff committee relaxed; Hiawatha was put on the coveted list and made official cartoonist of Oakwood School.

During his many ups and downs he toiled on at the Museum. "Genius" was prolific. At the end of the year he was among those recommended to the class without further trial. Again he had made good. His confidence is unquestioning; and perhaps he is right. Perhaps "art was cut out" for such as he, for those who trust her and do not heckle, who work for her and do not hair-split or dissect. Perhaps she is after all for those who simply early began "loveing the art of drawing."

---

### BIOGRAPHICAL

JAMES HEARST has published poems in *The Independent* and in other magazines, as well as in earlier issues of THE MIDLAND. His home is at Cedar Falls, Iowa.

LOLA MALLATT is a student at the University of Indiana.

SIDNEY DRAKE is the pseudonym of a writer who has contributed fiction and verse to earlier issues of THE MIDLAND.

GRACE STONE COATES is well known to MIDLAND readers both for her poems and for earlier prose sketches.

THELMA PHLEGAR's poems have appeared of late in several magazines.

KATHERINE GIBSON is a member of the staff of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

---

#### STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP AS REQUIRED BY LAW

of THE MIDLAND, published monthly at Iowa City, Iowa, for October 1, 1927.  
Owners and editors: John T. Frederick and Frank L. Mott, Iowa City, Iowa.  
Bondholders, mortgagees, etc.: none.  
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 27th day of September, 1927.

GLENN R. GRIFFITH, Notary Public.

---

END OF VOLUME XIII

